

MINUTES
Hamilton Affordable Housing Trust
November 30, 2016 - 6:00 p.m.
Hamilton- Wenham Library

Members present: Peter Britton, chair, Russ Tanzer, Mark Johnson and Bill Wilson.

Other people present: Patrick Reffett, Director of Planning and Inspections; Mary Beth Lawton, Director, Council on Aging; Dorr Fox, Hamilton Community Projects Coordinator.

Peter Britton opened the meeting at 6:10 p.m. Marc Johnson moved to approve the minutes of the October 20, 2016 joint meeting with the Planning Board and the October 20, 2016 meeting of the Trust following the joint meeting. Bill Wilson seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved. Mr. Johnson moved to approve the minutes of the November 9, 2016 meeting. Russ Tanzer seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved.

DISCUSSION WITH HAHT CONSULTANT ON COA/WINTHROP SCHOOL/PUBLIC SAFETY BUILDING

Mike Hardiman, Hargidon Architecture and Design, presented a powerpoint presentation on their findings and recommendations for the site as a potential location for affordable housing. The first slide showed the location of the site and its proximity to the urbanized areas of the Town of Hamilton. He noted that the proximity of the site to downtown Hamilton is an advantage as a potential site for affordable housing. He noted that the site is over sixteen acres in size and that the most usable area is in the rear.

Mr. Hardiman went through the history of the site. He noted that in 1910, the site was owned by J. Brown. The pond that is located in Patton Park drained across the site. The Boston and Maine rail line went through the Town. A spur line to Essex went along the rear of the site and is now the location of the gas line and a pedestrian path. There was also a trolley line in Town that went by the site. He noted that the site could act as a pedestrian connector in the Town.

Mr. Hardiman reviewed the natural features of the site. He noted that the southern and eastern portion of the site is wooded. Along Bay Road, there are parking lots, however, there are also large trees and lawns. The lawn areas extend around the school. He noted that the site is not flat and gently slopes to the wooded portion of the site.

Peter Conant, Hargidon Architecture and Design, noted that the soil is great material for wastewater. The ground water is located four and half to five and half feet below the ground surface. He also showed a plan that indicated utilities, including the gas, water, electric and sewage lines. He noted that before 1950, the site contained a police and fire station. There were a lot more trees and fields on the site. In 1949,

the Library was constructed, which now houses the senior center. At this time there are more buildings and parking on the site.

Mr. Conant explained that it would not be good to locate the proposed housing in the wooded portion of the site behind the public safety building. There is a depression in the woods, which is possibly a pond during much of the year. The site naturally drains to this area. There is also a large leaching field between the Public Safety Building and this wooded area where water from the parking lots and the roofs of buildings is piped.

Mr. Hardiman discussed transportation issues. He showed pedestrian paths to key sites in Town, such as the train station and the Community House. He explained that there are four vehicular access points to the site, including an emergency entrance, a Council on Aging Building entrance/ Winthrop School parent exit, a Winthrop School bus and parent entry, and a Winthrop School bus exit. He explained that these access points are not good for housing. He noted that this area of Bay Road can be very congested during certain times of the day. He believes that it is better to have vehicular access for housing off of Locust Street. This would allow the new residential housing to relate more to the existing residential uses instead of the municipal uses. He showed the locations of the parking lots on the site. He also noted that the site is zoned R1A, a residential zoning classification.

Mr. Conant showed a plan indicating the locations of the leaching fields on the site. He also stated that he had contacted the gas company to see if a vehicular crossing over the gas line was permissible. They stated that it was permissible.

Mr. Conant showed a plan where housing could be located in relation to the existing ball field and the proposed playground. He suggested that the Town could sell the land to a developer for \$150,000 to pay for the proposed school playground. He tried to show a pro forma he claimed indicated that a housing development containing affordable housing could be profitable, however it was too small to be legible and it wasn't discussed or reviewed.

Mr. Conant showed a plan where senior housing could be located along Bay Road either on the existing site of the Senior Center or adjacent to it. He noted that if the housing was for seniors, the first floor would need to be reserved for amenities. He explained that while they could move the required parking around the site, it would be difficult to locate senior housing on the site. It could not accommodate the amenities that would be required by a senior housing development. While there are good reasons to locate it there, there are more reasons not to. He believes that a senior housing developer, such as Sunrise, Benchmark or Deaconess, would not be impressed by this site.

Mr. Conant stated that he believes that having access off of Bay Road exacerbates an already difficult traffic and access issue. He also believes that that the area behind the school is better for family housing than senior housing.

Mr. Johnson inquired what the total cost would be for constructing twelve units. Mr. Conant stated with an approximate cost of \$100 per square foot and an assumption that each unit would contain 1800 square feet, each unit would cost \$179,000. There would also be infrastructure costs for the development which would be shared by the units. This scenario assumes that there would be nine market rate units and three affordable units. If the Town provides the land, there could be an increase in the number of affordable units. Mr. Conant said that his development plan was based on for purchase housing, not rentals, and would be comprised of 75 percent market housing and 25 percent affordable units.

Robert Porcetti stated that it was his understanding that the consultants were going to review a scenario where the units would be rental housing. He noted that there is a community host agreement with an affordable housing developer. Mr. Conant stated that they could create a pro forma for a rental project. Mr. Johnson noted that with fewer units, it appears that there are not enough units to spread out the shared costs of the project. Mr. Wilson inquired about creating a pro forma for a rental project. Patrick Reffett explained that the community host agreement never specified whether the housing would be rental or ownership units.

Mr. Britton requested that Andrew DeFranza comment on the site and the development scenarios. Mr. DeFranza stated that twelve units is a small number, however the development scenario could work if it was coupled with another site to create a larger project. A larger project may be eligible for a state subsidy. He mentioned a scenario where one could 'couple' the project with another project consisting of eighteen units and all of the units were rentals. However, he stressed that he needed near certainty that an appeal would not be filed on either of the two small projects since small 'coupled' projects would not work financially if there was a single appeal.

Mr. Wilson inquired which scenario Mr. DeFranza would prefer for the site if the units were leased. Mr. DeFranza stated that he would make a senior housing project on the site with smaller units. He thinks one could create twenty units on the site.

Mr. Conant noted that if a project is a rental project, all of the units will count toward the state mandated ten percent affordable housing requirement. Mr. Conant also stated that under Chapter 40B MGL, appeals by abutters do not ever succeed. He added that if the community develops a plan to create affordable housing, it also protects people from the requirements of Chapter 40B MGL. Mr. Tanzer explained that the Town's plan does not give them any protection because it has not been implemented.

Mr. Wilson noted that housing on the front of the site and additional housing at the rear of the site could work as a 'coupled' project.

Ray Gosseline inquired about the number of senior units needed for a successful project near the senior center. Mr. Conant stated that there would need to be at least thirty to forty units. He explained that senior housing projects need to provide

many amenities. Mr. Gosseline inquired whether affordable senior housing would count toward state's affordable housing requirement. It was noted that it does.

Dorr Fox noted that the Town could give the developer land, since the playground has been funded through Community Preservation Act funds and fundraising. In addition, the Affordable Housing Trust has \$200,000 that could be used for the project. He inquired whether this would increase the number of affordable units in the project. Mr. Conant stated that under this scenario, seven or eight of the twelve units could be affordable units.

Mary Beth Lawton inquired how many units could be constructed if one built units around the existing senior center. Mr. Conant responded that one could build up to 28 units. He noted that this scenario would be less expensive than tearing down the senior center. He stated that it might not be an attractive development, however, it could be done. He noted that there are many problems with the scenario, including creating additional parking. He noted that one could locate the storm water drain fields under the parking lots. He also noted that he could develop a pro forma where the housing would be rentals only.

Norma Robinson stated that it appears that it is not possible to do a senior housing building at the senior center site. In addition, town houses to the rear of the site may cause storm water issues.

There was a discussion regarding a pipe which drains across the site from the pond in Patton Park to the Miles River.

There was a question regarding the costs of the consultants. Mr. Britton noted that the cost of their review was \$8000. The consultants stated that they were willing to do additional work without charging more money to the Town.

Ms. Robinson is concerned about the Town giving the land for free and whether it is enforceable. Mr. Conant stated that it could be a condition of the permit. Mr. Johnson stated the Town is always expected to make a contribution and under this scenario, the Town could contribute less cash.

Bob Curry inquired whether Town residents could be given preference in a lottery for affordable units. There was a discussion on local preference. It was also noted that if the Town shows it is leading the way with an affordable housing project on Town land, it will be inspiration to others and will contribute to the Town's safe harbor. Mr. Britton noted that the site that is controlled by the Hamilton Development Corporation could be 'coupled' with the municipal site.

Lucinda Hines inquired how many people who live in Hamilton are eligible for affordable housing. Mr. Johnson stated that approximately one quarter of the Town qualifies for affordable housing. If seniors are included, the percentage rises. Ms. Hines inquired about the meaning of local preference. Mr. Johnson and Mr. DeFranza explained how local preference works.

Mr. Porcetti suggested that the Town place information on Chapter 40 B MGL and affordable housing on the web site. He also stated that he preferred the term 'cart' instead of 'basket' of sites. He also urged the Trust to finalize the list of selected sites.

Mr. Johnson discussed the Selectmen's meeting where the Trust presented the list of possible sites for affordable housing. Mr. Britton stated that the Trust had finalized their vote. Mr. Wilson suggested that the Trust discuss their next agenda and inquired whether the Trust would like to further deliberate on the sites considering all of the issues that have been brought up. Mr. Johnson stated that professionals, such as a wetlands biologist, need to address the issues that were brought up. These professionals need to do further work with the Board of Selectmen's development partners before the Project Eligibility Letter (PEL) is filed. The Trust members do not have the knowledge to do the work. Mr. Wilson stated that he would like to have a meeting between the Trust, Harborlight, the Planning Board and the neighbors of the sites to discuss the issues that were brought up. Mr. Britton stated that at this time it is up to the developers/partners to do the additional research into the topics. Mr. Johnson concurred stating that it is time for the partners to make a determination whether they want to go further on a site. Since the issues need professional attention, there is nothing that the Trust can add. Mr. Wilson stated that he is not comfortable going straight to the PEL process simultaneous with the professional studies.

Mr. Wilson stated that what he is hearing is that there is more diligence that should have been done. Mr. Johnson stated that at this time it is up to the partners to work with the Board of Selectmen. There will need to be political courage to work when there is a room of angry people. Mr. Wilson noted that there are many issues that need to be resolved, including easement issues and environmental issues. Mr. Britton noted that the partners are looking into the endangered species issues. Mr. Wilson stated that his email box is full at this time regarding the unresolved issues. He is not comfortable going straight to the PEL. Mr. Johnson stated that perhaps the Board of Selectmen can instruct their partners to circle back to the BOS before filing for a PEL on any property. Mr. Tanzer stated that Mr. DeFranza may look at a site, such as 13 Essex Street, and decide not to go forward with it.

Mr. Porcetti stated that the Trust has made its determination. He believes that the Board of Selectmen should have made a determination at its last meeting. He is concerned that Mr. Wilson implied that the Trust should disband regarding figuring out appropriate sites. Mr. Wilson explained that every time a site is suggested, the room is filled with neighbors who object. The Trust has developed a list of potential sites for affordable housing. The Trust is in a no win situation. The Selectmen will discuss it at their next meeting.

NEW BUSINESS

Mr. Britton announced that there is a new site under consideration, which is 560 Bay Road. It will be discussed at the next meeting. The neighbors should be notified of the meeting. Mr. Johnson will put together a report to give to Mr. Fox.

The Trust determined that they will meet on Thursday, December 14, 2016 at a location to be determined. Mr. Johnson moved to adjourn at 8:00 p.m. Mr. Wilson seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved.